

REMARKS

The Final Office Action dated December 17, 2003 (Paper No. 18) has been considered.

Summary of the Final Office Action

Claims 10-12, 14-19, and 21-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kameo et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,899,370) in view of Hirayama et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,128,434).

Claims 24-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kameo et al. in view of Hirayama et al. and further in view of Yuen et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,488,409).

Summary of the Response to the Office Action

Concurrent with the instant Request for Continued Examination (“RCE”) filing, Applicants have canceled claims 10-12, 14-19, and 21-31. Further, Applicants have added new claims 32-37. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, claims 32-37 are pending for consideration.

All Claims are Allowable

In the Office Action dated June 5, 2001 (Paper No. 4), originally-filed claims 5 and 6 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants have rewritten originally-filed claims 5 and 6 in independent form as new claims 32 and 35, respectively. Minor changes have been made to improve the readability of the claims. For example, in claim 35, “exists” was changed to --exist-- at line 29 in accordance with the Office Action dated

June 5, 2001 (Paper No. 4). Therefore, Applicants respectfully assert that independent claims 32 and 35 are in *prima facie* condition for allowance. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 33, 34, 36, and 37 are allowable at least because of their dependence from their respective independent claims.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the timely allowance of the pending claims. Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this Amendment, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at 202.739.5271 to expedite prosecution.

EXCEPT for issue fees payable under 37 C.F.R. § 1.18, the Commissioner is hereby authorized by this paper to charge any additional fees during the entire pendency of this application including fees due under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 which may be required, including any required extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 50-0310. This paragraph is intended to be a **CONSTRUCTIVE PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME** in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a)(3).

Respectfully submitted,

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